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CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE, PEACE & DEVELOPMENT SECRETARIAT/CARITAS PNG
Agency of the Catholic Bishops Conference Papua New Guinea Solomon Islands

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CDPM
DOCUMENTAÇÃO

Most Rev. Carlos Felipe Belo, SDB
Camara Ecclesiastica
DILI
East Timor, Indonesia.

Dear Bishop Belo,

The National Board of the Catholic Commission for Justice, Peace and Development of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands at its Meeting recently in Port Moresby directed me to convey to you and the Church in East Timor, our concern at the situation in East Timor and support for the efforts of the Church.

For some years we have followed the situation in East Timor with concern and sorrow. We continue to receive reports which indicate that there is no lessening in the in the disregard for human rights nor the destruction of the ethnic, religious and cultural identity of your people. We are aware of our proximity to East Timor. In Papua New Guinea, we put great value on our land, our ways of being and seeing the world, and our independence. This lies at the heart of what we call our Melanesian identity. Therefore, we feel strongly attempts made through military force to disregard these, and to dominate, oppress and destroy the identity of our neighbours, the people of East Timor.

However, we feel deep appreciation of the efforts by you, and the Church in East Timor to be with the people, and to condemn attempts made to destroy the identity of your people. We recognize that this has brought considerable difficulties and suffering for the Church in East Timor. But, we have the greatest admiration for your courage and determination in defence of your people, and in advocating a just and right solution for peace in East Timor.

We trust that the forthcoming visit of Pope John Paul to Dili will bring consolation and encouragement to the Church in East Timor, and that the Holy Father will again repeat the Holy See's concern for Justice, human rights and the identity of the people of East Timor.

We are aware that earlier this year you wrote to the Secretary General of the United Nations requesting him to start the process for a referendum to allow the Timorese people to vote on their future. We are aware that the Timorese people have not had the opportunity to participate in the internationally recognized right of self determination, and thereby to express their ideas and desires to whom they belong without pressure and without force.

We support your efforts to achieve this, and we will continue to press for a just and proper solution to your situation when such opportunities arise in Papua New Guinea. We will continue to ask our Government not to ignore the situation in East Timor, to take a more active role in the United Nations when the issue of East Timor arises, and to use the opportunities it has in its relationship with the Indonesian Government to voice the concern of Church bodies for the humanitarian needs of our neighbours in East Timor. Last year, the Catholic Commission for Justice, Peace and Development of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands had an opportunity to express iits concerns through a representative to the UN Decolonisation Committee Meeting, who spoke in favour of an act of self determination for the Timorese people.

We remain open, Bishop, to suggestions regarding further assistance that we might render in order that we be, more effectively, in solidarity with the Church in East Timor. We hope that an opportunity arises for you to visit us. We would warmly welcome you and host you in terms of arranging for you to brief the National Board of the Catholic Commission for Justice, Peace and Development on the situation in East Timor.

In conclusion, we ask that you convey our concern, support and admiration to the priests, religious and laity of the Church in East Timor. We hope and pray that the time ahead for you, the Church and the people of East Timor will be of increasing justice, freedom and hope.

Basil Peutalo
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY.